# THE INQUIRER

INCORPORATING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE UNITARIAN HERALD

ORGAN OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY
AND FREE RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP

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## WEEK BY WEEK

### G.B.S.—Ninety

BOOKS in honour of scholars and writers in their old age are familiar enough and there is nothing novel in such a book to Bernard Shaw. What is, however, novel is the alacrity and unanimity with which he is being acclaimed on his ninetieth birthday in so many different ways by so many different people. A whole batch of Penguin reprints are being devoted to him alone (Shakespeare hardly shares that honour); the World's Classics come out with a new edition of *Back to Methuselah* (characteristically enough, it has a new "Postscript"); and the newspapers and journals up and down the country will credit this event (rightly for once) with a news value which even the Bikini Atom did not share. We are in fact celebrating the ninetieth birthday of one who has played the title-rôle of an era, an era that may be as memorable in its way as the Victorian era which preceded it.

### The Shavian Era

The half-century or so since Queen Victoria's two jubilees has a character of its own and it will hardly find a more fitting title than the "Shavian era". The modern lightness (not to say sometimes levity) of the Press which Northcliffe began at the outset of the period has its counterpart in the brilliant writing of Shaw. There is too in Shaw and in the age in general a political seriousness in workaday clothes that contrasts oddly with the well-dressed pomp of Victorian politics. Combine that with a quizzical scepticism, for which the term "debunking" has been invented, and we have another characteristic of the age which Shaw exemplifies in its most complete form; for there is hardly a play of his in which some character is not detailed off to expose pretentiousness, only to have his own pretentions exposed as soon as we had begun to make them our own. And Shaw's unceasing epilogues and postscripts afford perhaps another characteristic of an age that never seems able to come to its last word. And so it might go on; Shaw so often exhibits in quintessence the traits that most clearly differentiate our era from the era that went before.

### Religion in the Shavian Era

Above all, Shaw is the best exponent of the most characteristic religion of our times—the effort to transform theories of evolution into new forms of faith. We have nearly forgotten the battles over Darwin and Evolution, but Shaw was born into them, and his *Metabiological Pentateuch* was an early attempt to make a religion out of evolution. With a touch of Romanticism he fled from the seemingly bleak prospect of evolution by the struggle for existence and survival in terms of chance adaptations to surroundings. He preferred to believe that strong-winged butterflies on a wind-swept island should survive, not because the weak-winged were blown out to sea and destroyed, leaving in possession only those who chanced to have stronger wings, but because the butterflies willed themselves stronger wings. The religion of the superman, the superwill, the gospel of the "Brothers Barnabas" was in the Shavian air and in the air of our era. How often in Shaw's plays is the hero a man who knows what he wants and has the courage to brush aside deterrents of decorum and decency that hold back other and lesser men! The hero's methods may be to lie on the floor and kick and squeal till he gets what he wants, or they may be exhibitions of cleverness against which there is little defence in a world of stupid blunderers, or, again, they may be the methods made familiar by the dictators our age has bred so plentifully and so characteristically. And it should not be forgotten that Shaw had more than a sneaking regard for Mussolini and his works in those added chapters to the *Intelligent Woman's Guide* and in a famous correspondence in the *Manchester Guardian* of 1927. A republication of that correspondence along with the *Guardian* leader at the time, would be of value even if they had a somewhat mournful and melancholy interest to-day.

### After the Event

It is easy now to be wise after the event and see where all this new fangled evolutionary religion was leading. But we may yet point the moral and lay bare the initial fallacy from which the rest followed. To worship will without too much regard for what was willed was a dangerous delusion. The preference for Lamarckian evolution over Darwinian evolution was to choose romantically, and ignore the sinister fact that whatever scientific differences may exist between the two theories, morally there is little or no difference at all. There is at least as much chance about evolving new powers because we happen to desire them (or have the secret of acquiring them) as because circumstances decree them and mutations are numerous enough to provide them and secure for the lucky possessors a competitive advantage. To have overlooked this essential similarity between the two rival theories of evolution may well be part of that rise of irrationalism in recent times which Mr. Garrard described in these pages a fortnight ago. That we are beginning to see the flaws in the prevailing outlook of the last fifty years is perhaps an indication that the Shavian era is already at an end. As descendants of an older liberalism which has not very surprisingly been somewhat under a cloud during an era such as this and which in our half-hearted moments we have ourselves betrayed, it is now for us to take up the tale where it was cut short, and restore something of the old Eighteenth Century respect for Reason. We shall not perhaps attribute to it any godlike power to supplant experience; but with it we can order experience into a coherent whole. What reason can contribute is what our era has most lacked.

### From Denmark

We print this week a short article by an aged Danish lady, which breathes once again something of the old sanity of the older liberal tradition in its relation to some of the bitterest problems of European life.

## KHASI UNITARIANS

**By Anthony Elenjimittam**

IN SHILLONG at last! Here is European climate, here blooms Switzerland beauty. In this calm, quiet and solitude of Khasi hills, one lives nearer to Nature, nearer that Master-Artist of this universe, God. Here no trains, no trams, no airways, no bustle and confusion of the big cities like Calcutta or Bombay. Here all is Life, and the infinite variety of Creation's charm holds one's mind and heart enthralled and inspired for days and weeks, and perhaps for years. Here is the inexhaustible source of poetry, here the right environment for undiluted idealism, here the air for renewed strength and health.

Since I came to this town of Shillong, the capital of Assam province, I have seen and studied much because I have left my eyes and heart open, not only to the delicate and gentle beauties of Nature, but also to the people inhabiting these hills, to their character, their religion, their customs, language, traditions and their everything. I still continue exploring and gathering information about the Khasi people, one of the most vigorous, virgin, unsophisticated and most westernised people in India.

Of the 300,000 Khasis scattered throughout the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills, nearly 80,000 belong to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission which has been active here for over a hundred years and has succeeded in relabelling many of the Khasi people. After knowing some of the prominent Presbyterian missionaries and some families belonging to that denomination, I have come to the conclusion that the type of Christianity they have taught the Khasis is the most fundamentalist, with the result that, once the Khasis become aware of the Indian cultural heritage, the Christianity, which the missionaries imposed on them also, will fall off and fade away. But the eternal message of Jesus and his gospel will remain unshaken. I contacted many of the Catholic missionaries, and although I appreciated much of their educational and humanitarian work up in the Khasi hills, I am afraid their proselitising work will share the same fate when the soul of Indian civilisation is revealed to the jovial and promising and happy people of the Khasi hills. I visited their colleges, schools, dispensaries, churches, chapels and many Catholic families. Although I appreciated much of the good work they have done and are doing to the Khasi people, I feel sad because their intention is relabelling of the illiterate and the ignorant on a sectarian basis. But religious freedom is one of the basic and most fundamental of all freedoms for man of the twentieth century.

Then we have Brahmo and Unitarian movements in the Khasi hills. Although there are over seven hundred Brahmos in all the Khasi hills there is today very little life in the Brahmo Samaj. There are no schools, no hospitals, no dispensaries attached to any of the Brahmo centres. But I have seen that the materials for work are already there and with the right sort of missionaries and apostles of the Religion of Man, Brahmo Samaj could be revived in the Khasi hills.

The Khasi Unitarian Church? I am staying with Margaret and am studying the Unitarian movement here very closely with a view to gaining first-hand information as accurately as I can. There is life in the Unitarian Church and there is a tilled ground for expansion and consolidation of the Unitarian ideal, if only the Unitarian Headquarters in London fully understand what is due to the Khasi work. Last Sunday I addressed some of the Khasi Unitarians in the Leban Church which was full. Then in the evening there was a family service which is a contribution of the Khasi Unitarians to the religious life of India. There is a sense of homeliness, religious gaiety and social happiness in these services, which I understand are held on every Sunday in every Unitarian centre in the Khasi hills. There is an open field for free religious apostolate, for an ever-growingly enlightened and universalist approach towards life.

But as I have said, it mostly depends upon the steps that the Headquarters of the Unitarian Church take not only in sending at least two suitable workers to help Margaret Barr in her undertaking. At present Margaret is running two schools, which, I understand from many friends of mine in Shillong, are run very efficiently. The main idea behind this educational work is to get or train a group of young men and women who are intellectually and spiritually so equipped as to be able to understand the highest freedom in religion, be it through Christian, Hindu or any other channel, and help the people of Khasi hills to rediscover their own soul, not distorted or vitiated through orthodox channels of Christianity. The work of this single, enterprising, and enlightened Unitarian friend out here in Khasi hills for the last ten years needs every encouragement and help not only from the thinking public of India, but also from the members of the same household in England. Just imagine the opposition and difficulties she has to contend with from bands of orthodox, powerfully organised churches all around. Margaret has neither men nor material to do that. The text books which the missionaries have prepared are good only for their own denominational use. Then, very soon Margaret is going to open a rural reconstruction centre, some sixteen miles away from Shillong, which will be also a centre for training workers and educationalists in the Unitarian Church. All these are works that are to be done and done without the least delay. In addition to the sympathy and support she gets from the intelligent Indian public, no help, no support, no assistance in men and material from England will ever be too great.

To my friends of the Unitarian Church in England I should say that it would be an irreparable loss if the growing needs of the Khasi Church are not adequately, intelligently and immediately met with. The facts and most accurate information I have at my disposal do not permit me to be pessimistic with regard to the possibility of revival of the Khasi Brahmo Samaj. If that happens there is also the possibility of our being able to work together not any longer on any dividing and communal basis, but on the solid rock of Man the Eternal.

## LIBERALISM IN DANGER

**By J. H. Austin**

IN HIS book, *Our Threatened Values*, Mr. Victor Gollancz has written an essay which Unitarians and Christians generally, whatever their political beliefs, would do well to study. Mr. Gollancz may be a socialist in economics, but in the broader and deeper world of spiritual affairs he is an uncompromising liberal; and, since his book is mainly about spiritual values, it will be read with approval by all who are not wedded to the popular but essentially unChristian doctrine that what is wrong in theory may be, and frequently is, right in practice.

The central value of values which Mr. Gollancz believes to be in danger is respect for personality. He emphasizes the fact that a man's personality is worthy of respect *in its own right*, and quite apart from any laudable deeds he may have done. (Perhaps the sentiment we feel for the latter is better expressed by the word "admiration.") By the same token, as he points out later on, speaking particularly of the Germans, while we should condemn evil deeds we should never condemn the doer, since to do so is to usurp the prerogative of judgment which belongs to God.

The liberal or Christian way of life, based on and centred around, respect for personality as such, is threatened from several directions. First, we see a revival of materialism, occasioned to a large extent by post-war economic shortages, and having as its most prominent symptom a ruthless self-interest. Secondly, and arising from this, we find not merely apathy towards, but a positive depreciation of, such Christian virtues as pity, forgiveness and tolerance. "Toughness" is "the thing", and mercy merely weak sentimentalism: forgiveness of one's enemies is no longer a Christian duty but is to be granted only after exacting repentance, and not always then. The attitude of mind engendered by such thoughts is self-righteousness, intolerant and lacking in humility, in fact, the very antithesis of the truly Christian. It lends itself readily to attacks on such essential freedoms as freedom of speech, often (happily not so much here as on the Continent) in the name of "suppressing Fascism"—fascism, in this connection usually being any opinion which the suppressor happens to dislike.

Mr. Gollancz lists some other tendencies which offer a threat to the liberal way of life, particularly in Europe. For instance, there is what he calls the "normalization of resistance traits"; by which he means that these qualities, such as violence, lawlessness and deceit, which made the good "resister", are to some extent becoming accepted as the norm of

daily behaviour, and these qualities are the very reverse of those required to build up a liberal civilization. Again, several countries show signs of reverting to a primitive type of justice, in which the motives of the "criminal" are dismissed as irrelevant and his real "crime" is to have been on the losing side. Thirdly, and in many ways most important, is the resurgence of a crude and unscientific "nationalism", which lumps together whole nations as "innocent" or "guilty" of causing the war, and justifies, even for many people in this country, the unChristian treatment of "ex-enemy" nationals. Mr. Gollancz deals at length with this subject, with much factual evidence, in the second half of his book.

But, paradoxically as it may seem to some, he sees the greatest threat to the liberal way of life in the spread of Communism. For while the communism of Karl Marx was assuredly based on respect for personality, in the course of its evolution it has become a system which denies the value of personality (or regards the question as irrelevant) and exalts the State above all. For the philosophic communist there is logic in this; the experiment is still in its infancy and, in the main, on the defensive; its survival is, for him, so important, that *any* means can be justified by the end in view. The liberal Christian, wondering where it is all going to end, may well remember Aristotle's words: "Our dispositions resemble our acts, *and are produced by them*". Mr. Gollancz, for his part, sees no answer to the communist challenge, or indeed to any form of totalitarianism, save "an utter devotion in thought and practice to our own ideals, and an heroic effort to spread them, by force of example, throughout the world"; which means, in the last analysis, that the problem of saving liberalism from extinction is the personal problem of each one of us, and that to evade it is to show most culpable irresponsibility, both as Christians and as world-citizens.

## BERNARD SHAW

**By Robert H. Williamson**

THE GREATEST man it has ever been my privilege to meet is George Bernard Shaw. Not that the "meeting" counts for much—for his influence upon my thought and life would have been very great had we never met at all. If I were asked to give the main tenet of Bernard Shaw's philosophy I should at once reply "the sanctity of life". It is upon this main foundation that his attitude towards man in his social relations depends. A violence done to life—not to physical life alone, but also to mental and spiritual life (a kind of violence which is often, comparatively speaking, thought lightly of or ignored), is, to him, the unpardonable sin. His whole desire is for the sanctification and furtherance of the real. So in Act III of *Man and Superman* he defines Hell as "the home of the unreal and of the seekers for happiness"—and as "the only refuge from Heaven, which is the home of the masters of reality." Life is defined as "the 'force' that ever strives to attain greater power of contemplating itself." Throughout the evolutionary process "Life was driving at brains—at its darling object: an organ by which it can attain not only self-consciousness, but self-understanding." "Life is evolving to-day a *mind's-eye* that shall see, not *the physical world*, but the purpose of Life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and baffling it by setting up short-sighted personal aims, as at present."

It will be seen at once that this philosophy increases man's personal responsibility for the well-being of the world enormously. It says in effect: "You must, to the uttermost extent of your power, seek to discover the Will of the Life Force (the Divine Will) and to fulfil it." It leaves no room for that old excuse for laziness *submission to the Will of God*. Instead we are to *do* the Will of God, which is a much more arduous proceeding. It is for this reason that Shaw extols the philosopher and his function. "I sing the philosophic man: he who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to *do* that will by the so-discovered means."

Shaw sees men and women as a god from a distant sphere would see them, with their relative greatness and littleness marked out as clearly and relentlessly as the countries are marked on a map. *He sees their souls*: nothing is hidden from his piercing gaze. Always as we read his dialogue it is as if a spiritual reporter had been present and had noted in his book, not what the characters said with their lips, but what they felt in their souls. His philosophy, it has been said, is entirely destructive. As a matter of fact, no more constructive philosophy was ever offered to mankind. There is a challenge to us all in his interpretation of "the true joy in life." "It is being used," he declares, "for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap-heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

## DENMARK DURING INVASION

### A "SUBJECTIVE" CONFESSION

**By Mary B. Westenholz**

[*Miss Westenholz, who is nearing ninety years of age, will be known personally to some of our older readers, who will be glad to renew her acquaintance through our pages. But it is not her age nor old associations that will commend her article to readers so much as its quiet good sense.*]

"WHAT DOES it feel like to be oppressed, to have foreigners lording it over you in your own country?" In his Essex Hall Lecture Dr. L. J. Van Holk has given an immensely interesting and instructive "objective" description of what his people and he himself felt and experienced during the German occupation of Holland.

When I read the résumé of it in *The Inquirer* a wish rose in me to supplement it by a confession of a purely "subjective" experience, which may be of interest to the readers of *The Inquirer*. To make it clear to them who the writing "subject" is I must speak a little about myself.

When in 1864 Germany and Austria combined to invade and plunder Denmark—to realize what that meant please look at the map—I was a little girl seven years old, living on a big farm in Jutland where we (seven little brothers and sisters) saw a good deal of the enemies' armies passing to and fro, and eagerly swallowed what we could grasp of the grown-ups' talk—sorrow, anger, hate; and, like the little barbarians children are, we revelled in all possibilities and impossibilities for revenge. Up till this day I remember the pleasure we took in an old peasant's declaration: "I am not bloodthirsty, but I could without flinching hold Bismarck while he was being skinned". And for more than fifty years, up till 1918, when we had our revenge, some of these feelings, though in less drastic garments, survived in me, and they were certainly predominant when Hitler began his robber march.

When on the 9th of April, 1940, a servant burst into my room saying: "The Germans have occupied Copenhagen", I was perfectly stunned. I could not realize what it was that had happened. Not even when two days later a little detachment of the German forces arrived and were quartered here at the farm, where I now live, midway between Copenhagen and Elsinore, could I understand what was really happening. *Denmark occupied and lorded over by the Germans!!* The soldiers remained quartered here for three weeks. They might have been empty air to those of us who were not *compelled* to treat with them. We did not hear, we did not see them, we went about our daily tasks as if they did not exist, and they did not make themselves conspicuous. Men and horses lay in the straw in the barn, their food was brought them from headquarters. The farmer, who had to consult with them, and at whose table the officer had his meals, told me that the men were little Hanoverian farmers, torn away from their homes and work, to suffer and fight—for what? They did not know. They were frightfully homesick.

In these three weeks it was that a thing I could never have expected or foreseen happened to me. A sense of community with humanity grew stronger in me than even my patriotism, and it has never since left me. I have not during the five dreadful years that ensued spoken to a German, never looked into one's face. I have slighted and ignored them whenever they crossed my path, but it has caused me more pain than pleasure to do so. And now that the German people must and have to bear the consequences of fiendish misdeeds, beastly atrocities (if not as accomplices of Hitler, at least as unresisting tools in his hands) I do not

share the satisfaction of most of my countrymen. I feel as if I were witnessing a terrible tragedy.

You may say that this is a sign of senility. I am quite aware that I could not and would not have felt like this forty or fifty years ago, but if it holds true that "it takes all kinds of people to make the world", the shaking voice of the very old should, as well as the prattle of the little child, make itself heard in the great chorus of humanity.

*Denmark in July*, 1946.


## THE INQUIRER

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# CORRESPONDENCE

### YOUR TRINKETS FOR THE APPEAL

SIR,—Following upon your note about readers giving their treasures to be disposed of for the benefit of the Appeal Fund, I am happy to announce that if any of your readers care to help in this way arrangements have now been made for them to do so.

Mr. C. H. Major, 154 Kensington Church Street, London, W.8, has very generously offered to place his services at our disposal.

Mr. Major is an antique dealer and acts as local treasurer for the fund at Essex Church. If readers will send articles to him he will either dispose of them himself or arrange for this to be done, and hand over the proceeds to the fund. May we express the hope that many readers will take advantage of this novel way of helping, bearing in mind how much was raised during the war for the Red Cross by this method. Antiques, art treasures, china, jewellery and musical instruments such as violins, etc., will be most suitable.—Yours, etc.,

*John Kisby.*

*Stockport.*

### PRISONERS OF WAR

SIR,—I am wondering what is being done to satisfy the spiritual needs of those who hold similar religious positions to ourselves and are P.o.W.s in this country. As their stay looks like being prolonged, may I make a suggestion?

It may be a good thing if those of our churches near a prisoner camp contacted the authorities with the view of arranging services in their churches. Recreational facilities may also be arranged.

This suggestion is not original. In West Norwood, Catholic P.o.W.s in a local camp march to church every Sunday, and the priest sometimes ends his sermon with a few words in German. Also the church and parochial hall have been placed at their disposal one evening each week for benediction, followed by recreation.

The needs of these men, as I know from much personal contact as foreman of a gang, are very great and we must not be too proud to follow the good lead set by the Catholics in doing something to meet them, no matter how small. May we also remember them in our prayers.—Yours,

*Hove.* *Keith C. Treacher.*

### HUMANITY AND DIVINITY OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

SIR,—I in turn am amazed at Mr. Wilson's statement: "Neither the fourth Gospel nor any epistles of St. Paul contains the doctrine of the pre-existence and incarnation of Jesus." I can hardly imagine a clearer statement of his pre-existence than John viii, verse 58: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The very term incarnation is based on John i, verse 14: "And the word became flesh"; the context plainly shows that it was in Jesus, though there is nothing to explain how it took place.

That Paul's view was similar is shown by the famous Kenosis passage in Philippians ii, especially in the words (verses 6-7) "who, being in the form of God, . . . emptied himself, . . . being made in the likeness of men".—Yours,

*L. A. Garrard.*

*Liverpool.*

### NOTES AND JOTTINGS

**Presentation to Rev. Wright Brandbeat**

On July 6 the Eastern Union picnic at the Manse, Framlingham, was the occasion of a pleasant ceremony. The Rev. Wright Brandbeat was presented with a substantial cheque to commemorate his twenty years as Suffolk Village Missionary of the Central Postal Mission. Mrs. Balfontyne presided and nearly eighty members from the congregations of the Union were present.

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As the treasurer of the Appeal Fund will be away on holiday from July 27 to August 10, correspondents are asked to put up with a little delay in receiving replies.

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The "Week by Week" notes this week are contributed by Rev. R. Thomas.

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As usual on the last Saturday in the month "THE INQUIRER" is a four page number.


## The General Assembly £100,000 Appeal

Total in hand week ending July 20th, £70,310 8s. 5d.

**HAVE YOU SUBSCRIBED YET?**

*Hon. Treasurer:* Harold B. Moore

"Newlands", The Drive, Ringway, Nr. Altrincham.

*Watch this space for weekly announcements.*


### YOUTH ORGANIZER

Applications are invited for the post of Youth Organizer in connection with the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, for an initial period of three years, at a salary of £400 per annum. For particulars apply to the Secretary of the General Assembly, 14 Gordon Square, W.C.1. Closing date for applications, August 1st.

### MISCELLANEOUS

GLOUCESTER UNITARIAN CHAPEL.—The Pulpit will become vacant in the near future and applications from Ministers would be welcomed. Communications to the Secretary: Mr. W. H. Nuttall, Delroyd, Hucclecote, Gloucester.

VACANCY.—Applications invited, South Shore Unitarian Church Minister, Blackpool. Supply required from July. W. Bradbury, 3 Harris Avenue, Blackpool.


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Church-secretaries and others are advised to be careful in their dealings with a certain person claiming to be a member of a Cheshire Unitarian Congregation and seeking pulpit supplies.

### ENGAGEMENT

The ENGAGEMENT is announced between William Cassies, second son of the late Mr. and Mrs. W. Macfarlane, of Aschullsea Juro, and Mabel Frances, only daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. E. Allkins, of Montrose.

### GOLDEN WEDDING

WALLER—STANNARD. On July 18, 1896, at the Octagon Chapel, Norwich, by the Rev. Edgar Daplyn, Walter Waller, to Mary Ann Elizabeth Stannard. Present address, 52 Cambridge Street, Norwich.

### DEATH

GENEVER.—On July 19, 1946, at 28 Belsize Park, N.W.3, Charles Arthur Genever, Secretary-General, Baptist Assembly.


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